

Standard 4000-04

Phonics and Spelling

Beginning readers must know and understand the relationship between letters and sounds in order to learn to read and spell. In addition, beginning readers must know and be able to use a variety of phonics skills to unlock unknown words. Phonics skills are critical to the word identification process until almost all words are learned to the point of automaticity—that is, to the point where words are recognized automatically, without thinking. Phonics instruction has been shown to be most effective when taught systematically, sequentially, and explicitly.

Research reports that phonics instruction is most effective when taught early. Phonics instruction:

- Significantly improves kindergarten and first-grade children's word recognition and spelling.
- Significantly improves children's reading comprehension.
- Is effective for children from various social and economic levels.
- Is particularly beneficial for children who have difficulty learning to read and are at risk for developing future reading problems.
- Is more effective than non-systematic or no phonics instruction.
- Is not an entire reading program for beginning readers.

Approaches to phonics instruction include:

- Analogy children use parts of word families to identify words they don't know.
- Analytic children analyze letter-sound relationships in previously learned words to read new words.
- Embedded children use letter-sound relationships while reading connected text.
- Onset-rime children learn to identify the sound of the first letter with the remaining part of the word.
- Synthetic children convert letters into sounds and blend the sounds to make words.

Research shows that students who are at-risk readers profit significantly from systematic synthetic phonics instruction.

Spelling is a developmental process. Research confirms that spelling, for most people, requires something above and beyond experience with reading. The ability to read a word does not always guarantee a child can spell the word. Without fluent spelling skills, many students continue to struggle with the mechanics of the writing process and cannot focus their attention and energy on what and why they are writing. Careful examination of words that are part of formal spelling instruction can affect the quality of students' writing, as well as their reading experiences.

Correct spelling requires prediction and memory. It is a combination of interactive language processes, use of strategies, self-checking and monitoring. Spelling instruction, in past years, has often been a practice of having students memorizing lists of single words. However, research

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tells us it is more productive to teach word families, syllabication, word origins, and basic spelling rules as a major part of spelling instruction. Spelling should be a thinking activity, not merely a memory activity. According to research, efficient spellers view spelling as a problem-solving activity. They have a strong sense of control over their own learning, using a combination of strategies to spell unknown words during writing while committing the spelling of words to memory.

The following are possible suggestions and not all-inclusive:

Teacher Delivery

1. Provide explicit, systematic, synthetic instruction to students on letter sounds and blending for the purpose of decoding and spelling words.
2. Provide explicit instruction on vowels, vowel digraphs, and vowel variants.
3. Provide instruction on segmenting and blending letters to form words.
4. Provide opportunities for students to build words with onsets and rimes.
5. Provide experiences in making words, word sorts, and studying word walls.
6. Provide instruction and application in analyzing word parts (e.g., word chunks, prefixes, suffixes, roots, syllables).
7. Provide instruction on strategies to read and spell unknown words.
8. Use decodable text in earlier grades as an integral part of explicit phonics instruction.
9. Provide sound-by-sound dictation and whole word dictation as a means of practice.
10. Determine students' developmental spelling level.
11. Generate word lists according to students' developmental level, writing sample, and commonly misspelled words.
12. Provide explicit instruction to teach spelling as a developmental process beginning with sound-symbol relationships.
13. Provide explicit instruction with spelling patterns.
14. Provide and encourage students to use spelling cues as needed for accuracy when completing writing assignments.
15. Provide numerous opportunities for students to see words spelled correctly.
16. Teach spelling as part of the reading and writing process.
17. Teach commonly misspelled words (e.g., they, too, there).
18. Teach proofreading as an application of spelling knowledge.
19. Provide instruction on resources to assist spelling (e.g., dictionaries).
20. Teach specific strategies to promote spelling and writing fluency.
21. Encourage and foster accountability for correct spelling.

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Teacher Delivery Continued

22. Encourage interest and enthusiasm for words; avoid word searches, word puzzles, and writing words multiple times.
23. Provide frequent opportunities for purposeful writing.

Assessment:

Formal: Approved state, district, and school assessments.

Informal:

1. Checklists of skills used by students.
2. Anecdotal records of noted behaviors in class.
3. Conferences and discussions with students.
4. Performance assessment to see how well students apply phonetic principles.
5. Informal reading inventories.
6. Running records.
7. Assessments of decoding ability.
8. Pre- and post-spelling tests.
9. Writing samples.
10. Spelling inventories.

Differentiation

1. Provide explicit instruction in the area of the student's deficit.
2. Provide activities that focus on the manipulation of letters and sounds.
3. Provide opportunities for students to respond kinesthetically to instruction.
4. Provide modeling and demonstration.
5. Provide opportunities for students to use and manipulate letters.
6. Provide multiple practice opportunities with decodable books.
7. Provide visual, auditory, and kinesthetic instruction with spelling.
8. Generate lists of key words from student's reading and writing.
9. Provide varied and frequent practice with words.
10. Modify practice opportunities with feedback (e.g., word sorts, making words).

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Differentiation (Continued)

11. Provide opportunities for students to learn to spell functional words.
12. Analyze, with the student, the errors being made in writing assignments, using this information for reading and spelling instruction.
13. Assess often, observing skill level and strategy used.
14. Modify practice opportunities according to individual student needs.
15. Help students develop a study process that fits individual needs.
16. Teach students to apply strategies in determining unknown words and spellings.

Home Connections

1. Communicate expectations to parents.
2. Provide suggestions for parents to help their children with phonics applications.
3. Encourage parents to listen to children read decodable books nightly.
4. Train parents to be able to select appropriate books for their children to practice reading.
5. Help parents to set aside time nightly for children to read to adults.
6. Encourage parents to provide their children with opportunities to write, encouraging correct spelling (e.g., grocery lists, notes to family members, thank you notes).
7. Encourage parents to play word games.
8. Encourage parents to support teacher spelling instruction.
9. Help parents encourage interest in words.